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The **Domain Name System (DNS)** associates various sorts of information with so-called domain names; most importantly, it serves as the "phone book" for the Internet by translating human-readable computer hostnames, e.g. [www.example.com](#), into the IP addresses, that networking equipment needs to deliver information. It also stores other information such as the list of mail exchange servers that accept email for a given domain. In providing a worldwide keyword-based redirection service, the Domain Name System is an essential component of contemporary Internet use.

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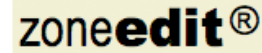


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DNS (Domain Name Server) Terminology

Term	Description
A Record	Address Record, assigns an IP address to a domain name. When the domain name system was designed it was recommended that no two A records refer to the same IP address. This is not practical due to the limitations of CNAME records.
Alias	See CNAME record.
Ancestry	Term used to describe zones and domain names. Root, written as "." is the ultimate ancestor zone. All top level domains like com, gov, and org are all its children. example.com is the child of com. gomer.example.com is the child of example.com. Com is an ancestor of gomer.exaple.com, as is ".". Another way to think of children is as subdirectories (delegations) of parent directories, or as folders within folders.
Authoritative	Adjective describing a name server or a response from a name server that is referencing its own native data. The authoritative server contains an entire copy of the zone that is derived from local configuration data, possibly with the help of another authoritative name server for the zone. Data is obtained without the need for caches or the help of any resolver. A server can be authoritative about one zone but not authoritative for another.
BIND	Berkeley Internet Name Daemon. The most common DNS software of the internet. Ported to every flavor of Unix and Windows NT (Windows is a Trademark of the Microsoft Corp.). Bind source code is maintained by the Internet Software Consortium.
Caching	The act of recording authoritative response to resolver queries for future reference. Generally cached records will be purged after a predetermined time.
Canonical Name	The real name of a host. Used in CNAME records, PTR records, NS records and MX records. A canonical name is something of a fiction because many servers have more then one equally valid name. Basically, any domain name that has an A record.
CIDR	Classless Inter Domain Routing. Currently subnets are defined by the number of binary bits they have in common. This replaces the older subnet class system. Each octet of the IP address can be broken down into two hexadecimal digits; it takes 8 bits to represent each pair of hexadecimal digits. So a class A subnet which shares the first octet would be an 8 Bit subnet. A class B would be a 16 Bit subnet. A class C subnet would be a 24 bit subnet. If your ISP provides you with a subnet you will likely have many more bits in common. For example, if you were given a 29 bit subnet, you would have 8 IP addresses, an Identifier address, 6 useable IP addresses, and a broadcast IP address.
Class A Subnet	A subnet that shares the first octet.
Class B Subnet	A subnet that shares the first and second octets.

Class C Subnet	A subnet that shares the first, second, and third octets.
CNAME Record	Canonical Name Record. Creates an alias of a canonical name. The alias gains all properties of the original, including IP addresses and mail routes. Because of this, it is illegal for there to be any other record with the same owner name as a CNAME record. It is also illegal for any record other than a CNAME record to refer to an alias.
Delegation	The process of separating a descendant of a zone into a separate zone. The delegation is accomplished with NS records and if necessary, A records. NS records used for this purpose are called "delegation records", A records used for this purpose are called "glue records." Records in a delegation are an exception to the rule that a record should only be defined only in the zone that owns the name of the record.
Dig	Similar to nslookup. Another command line tool for querying DNS servers. Somewhat unwieldy, bundled with BIND. Like all Unix terms, dig is case sensitive and must always be used in lower case.
DNS Server	A DNS Server is any piece of software that serves as a name server, a resolver, or both.
Domain	Most often used to refer to a domain zone, domain is also used to describe a zone, or a domain name. This ambiguity results in an unbelievable number of technical support questions, and is a driving force in the sales rate of "DNS and Bind."
Domain Zone	Any zone that isn't a reverse zone. Root is an exception; root is not a domain zone. Sometimes called a forward domain, or forward zone. This terminology came about because of the ambiguity of the word domain, and use of the term reverse domain, which is now considered archaic.
Dynamic IP Address	A Dynamic IP address is one that is temporarily assigned to a user by their internet service provider every time the connect. This cuts down on the number of IP addresses large consumer providers need because not all of their customers are using the service at any given time. It also cuts down on bandwidth usage by preventing consumers from hosting servers. Note: Recently a number of companies have started to offer services aimed at updating DNS for dynamically connected clients.
Expire Field	Sixth field in an SOA record. Measured in seconds. If the refresh and retry attempts fail after that many seconds the server will stop serving the zone. Typical value is 1 week. Not used by a primary server.
Forward Domain	Archaic, See Domain Zone
Forward Zone	See Domain Zone.
Forwarding	The process of sending a recursive query sent from a host to a resolver, to a second predetermined resolver. Reasons for forwarding might involve a resolver having little or no net access, or if one resolver has a significantly larger cache.
Fully Qualified Domain Name	A domain name that extends all the way back to root. Often written as FQDN. gomer.gimboid.com. is an FQDN. A common error is to leave the "." at the end off. gomer.example.com is NOT an FQDN, by leaving out the last "." Root is not included. An FQDN is required any time you reference a domain name outside a zone, optional when referencing names inside the zone. CNAME records, NS records, and MX records might refer to names outside the zone, they often require an FQDN.
Fully Qualified Host Name	See Fully Qualified Domain Name.
Glue Record	A glue record is an A record that is created as part of a delegation. If a zone is delegated to a name server

	whose hostname is a Descendant of that particular zone, then a glue record for that hostname must be included in the delegation.
Hexadecimal	Base 16 math. Computers normally "think" in base two math, called binary. The only two digits are 1 and 0. So in binary the number 5 would be represented by 101 (1 in the fours place, and one in the ones place.) This binary thinking is generally translated into base 16 math. That is to say, you can have a single digit number as high as 15. Single digit numbers higher then 9 are usually represented by letters A-F. So the hexadecimal number C5 translates to 197 in normal base 10 math; 12 in the 16's place and 5 in the ones place.
HINFO Record	Host Information Record. Strictly informational, not functional. Used to declare the computer type and operating system of a host.
Host	A host is any machine on any network. On TCP/IP networks, each host has one or more unique IP addresses.
Hostname	A Hostname is any domain name that has one or more IP addresses associated with it. The association is created by placing an A record in the zone that owns the domain name. Zone A owns domain name D if: There are no other zones in the line of ancestry between A and D.
IP Address	A unique identifier number for any host on any TCP/IP network, including the Internet. An IP address is made up of four octets. Each octet has a value between 0-255
Iterative query	A request, usually made by a resolver, for any information a server already has in memory for a certain domain name.
Label	An element of a domain name. No label can be longer then 63 characters. Labels are made up of letters, numbers and hyphens, but may not start with hyphens. Labels in a domain name are separated from each other by "."s. Labels are case insensitive. For Example: WWW.All.These.8.labels.are.very-good.gov
LOC Record	Location Record. Experimental, proposed in 1996. Informational, not functional. Used to give latitude and longitude, in degrees minutes and seconds, altitude in meters, and dimensions (in terms of meters) of a host. Of no practical use except to hi-tech thieves with a GPS tracker
Machine	See Host.
Mail Relay	The process of sending a message from one point to another through an intermediary. Any mail server that supports this should have some kind of filter system in place to avoid unauthorized use by spammers. Mail servers without this protection are open to hijacking. More on mail relay.
Master Server	See Primary Server.
Minimum Field	Seventh field in an SOA Record. The default TTL for every record in the zone. Can be overridden for any particular record. Typical values range from eight hours to four days. When changes are being made to a zone, often set at ten minutes or less.
MX Record	Mail Exchange Record. Creates a mail route for a domain name. A domain name can have multiple mail routes, each assigned a priority number. The mail route with the lowest number identifies the server responsible for the domain. Other mail servers listed will be used as backups.
Name Server	A name server is software that runs on a host that can be set to authoritatively answer queries for records in a zone.
Node	See Host.
NS Record	Name Server Record. An NS record declares that a

	given zone is served by a given name server. Every NS record is either a delegation record or an authority Record. If the name of the NS record is the name of the zone it appears in, it is an authority record. If the name of the NS record is that of a descendant zone, then it is a delegation record.
NSlookup	Standard tool for querying name servers in command line operating systems like Un*x and NT.
Octet	An octet is one of the four numbers making up an IP address. Octets values can range from 0 to 255. Each octet can be expressed as 8 binary bits, hence the name octet. An octet can also be represented by 2 digits of Hexadecimal.
Origin	The ancestor that is appended to an unqualified domain name to form a fully qualified domain name. Usually set to the zone name.
Owner	A zone owns itself and all descendant names that are not delegated. A server for a zone can respond authoritatively for any domain name owned by the zone.
Primary Field	The first field of an SOA record. This field is informational only and has no function. It is intended to hold the hostname of the primary server.
Primary Server	Also called a master server. An authoritative name server that gets its zone data from local configuration, not from an outside source. This term is used in terms of a specific zone. The primary server of one zone could be a secondary server in regards to another zone. Despite a common misconception, from a resolver's point of view, primary and secondary servers are equal in authority and priority.
PTR Record	Pointer Record. Also called a reverse record. A PTR record associates an IP address with a canonical name. PTR records should point to a name that can be resolved back to the IP address. The name of the pointer record is not the IP address itself, but is the IP address' four IP octets in reverse order followed by IN-ADDR.ARPA. for Example: 192.168.0.1 becomes 1.0.168.192.IN-ADDR.ARPA.
Record	See, Resource Record.
Record Class	There are three schemes for record systems, Internet, Hesiod, and Chaos. Hesiod is only used at M.I.T, and maybe not even there anymore. Chaos is almost extinct, BIND uses it to check its version number, but that's about it. Internet is the system that 99.999% of servers use.
Recursive Query	A recursive query is a request from a host to a resolver to find data on other name servers.
Refresh Field	Fourth field in an SOA record. Refresh determines the number of seconds between a successful check on the serial number on the zone of the primary, and the next attempt. Usually around 2-24 hours. Not used by a primary server.
Resolver	A resolver is a host capable of performing a recursive search of the Domain Name System to locate records that would answer a query. It does this by querying name servers, including the root servers. In other words, a resolver is a DNS server that looks up DNS records on behalf of a client machine.
Retry field	Fifth field in an SOA record. If a refresh attempt fails, a server will retry after this many seconds. Not used by a primary server.
Reverse Domain	Archaic, see Reverse Zone.
Reverse Record	See PTR Record.
Reverse Zone	A reverse zone is a zone whose purpose is the mapping of IP addresses to names. Nearly all reverse zones are descended from the IN-ADDR.ARPA zone.

Root Server	There are currently 13 servers that are authoritative for the root zone. They are named a.root-servers.net - m.root-servers.net. Every resolver must have the IP addresses of one or more of these root servers coded in so that it can resolve domain name.
Root Zone	The ancestor of all zones, the parent of the top level domains. It is written as ". ". Root (as it is often called) has no labels.
RP Record	Responsible Person. Informational, not functional. Used to indicate the person responsible for the domain.
Secondary Server	Sometimes called a slave server: A secondary name server is an authoritative name server that gets its data from outside sources, usually a zone transfer from a primary server. This term only applies to relations with a specific zone, a secondary server for one zone could be a primary for another. Despite a common misconception, from a resolvers point of view, primary and secondary servers are equal in authority and priority.
Serial Number Field	Third Field in an SOA record. Used by a secondary server to determine if it requires a zone transfer from the primary server. If the Secondary's Number is lower than the Primary's, then the secondary server knows that its records are out of date. Not used by a primary server.
Server	See Secondary Server.
SOA Record	Start of Authority Record. The SOA is the first record in every properly configured zone. The SOA record contains information about the zone in a string of fields. The SOA record tells the server to be authoritative for the zone.
Static IP Address	A static IP Address is an IP address assigned by a service provider that never changes. This requires that the service provider keep at least one IP address per customer. Because their IP address remains fixed, static IP addresses can be used for hosting name servers.
Subdomain	Any child of a domain zone.
Subnet	A contiguous string of IP addresses. The first IP address in a subnet is used to identify the subnet, the last IP address in the subnet is always used as a broadcast address. Anything sent to the last address is sent to every host on the subnet.
Subnet Class	<p>Traditionally subnets have been broken down into three size classes based on the 4 octets that make up an IP address. For example: 123.001.002.178.</p> <p>Class A was any subnet that shared the first octet. Apple for example has a class A subnet. The first octet was 0017. All IP addresses starting with 17 are controlled by Apple. A class A subnet has over 16 Million possible IP addresses. Apple thus effectively controls 1/255th of the Internet.</p> <p>Class B subnets share the first two octets. Class C subnets share the first three octets, effectively giving a class C subnet 254 possible IP addresses. (Remember that the first and last IP addresses are used as a network number and a broadcast address.)</p>
TLD	See Top Level Domain
Top Level Domain	<p>Any zone owned by the root servers. You can also think of this as the first label in any domain name other than root (which has no labels)</p> <p>For Example: com, edu, gov, mil, net, org, int, arpa, country codes.</p>
Tree	A common analogy for the branching structure of the Domain Name System. Under this analogy various domain names are referred to as nodes.
TTL	Time To Live, the number of seconds remaining on a

	cached record before it is purged. For authoritative records the TTL is fixed at a specific length. If a record is cached, the server providing the record will provide the time remaining on the TTL rather than the original length it was given
TXT Record	Text Record: Strictly informational, not functional. Used to provide up to 255 characters of free form text, hopefully about the zone. Multiple TXT records are permitted but their order is not necessarily retained, a bad forum for presenting War and Peace.
Unqualified Domain Name	A domain name that is intentionally written incompletely with the understanding that some ancestor domain name will be appended to form a fully qualified domain name.
WKS Record	Well Known Service Record. Experimental, not yet adopted or used by any browser. WKS is generalized version of the MX record. Which is not just for mail but for any service. Examples would be POP, HTTP and FTP. If adopted, it will allow greater flexibility in resolving names from IP addresses and will lessen some of the problems cause by native round robin load sharing in servers.
Zone	Any domain name that has been delegated by an ancestor zone. Also includes all descendant domain names that have not been delegated.
Zone Transfer	A special type of query that asks a name server for the entire contents of a Zone. Cached records are never reported in a zone transfer. Zone transfers are usually used by secondary servers to update its own zone data from its primary server.

